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Request for Information Reference: 05.22.40

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Email only

20<sup>th</sup> June 2022

## Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Request for Information

Thank you for submitting a request for information which we received on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2022 in relation to County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust). Your request has been processed under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and I am now able to provide you with a response.

Your request was in relation to breast reconstructive surgery and I am providing the following information in response to your specific questions:

### NHS Trusts provision of Breast reconstruction and balancing surgery

#### Part A- Delayed reconstructive surgery backlog

1. **Following the suspension of reconstructive surgery in March 2020 as a result of the pandemic, when was reconstructive surgery restarted within your trust, for:**
  - a. **Immediate reconstruction?**
  - b. **delayed reconstructive surgery (*by delayed reconstructive surgery we mean reconstructive surgery that happens after a mastectomy as opposed to immediate reconstructive surgery which occurs concurrently*)?**

All breast reconstruction was suspended during the lockdown periods. In July - December 2020 the Trust restarted all activity however capacity was limited by theatre access. In addition there was a change in practice by breast surgeons using hormone treatment and neoadjuvant chemotherapy, instead of surgery, due to risks associated with surgery and Covid-19.

From approximately April 2021 the Trust had restarted all reconstruction procedures but capacity was again limited by theatre access and pressure from urgent cases on waiting lists.. These pressures continue but in 2022 the

Trust has been able to perform some long waiting delayed reconstruction and all potential immediate reconstruction cases have been carefully considered and in most cases carried out.

2. **What percentage of patients who have been on the waiting list since March 2020 to May 2022 have had their reconstructive breast surgery, for:**
  - a. **immediate reconstruction?** - 5.3%
  - b. **delayed reconstruction?** - 32.1%
  
3. **At what proportion of capacity (i.e. average number of patients operated on per month) is the service currently operating at for:**
  - a. **immediate reconstruction?** - 1.4 per month
  - b. **delayed reconstructive surgery?** - 2.5 per month
  
4. **At what capacity (average number of patients operated on per month) was the service operating at pre-pandemic for (January 2019 – January 2020)?**
  - a. **immediate reconstruction?** - 0.5 per month
  - b. **delayed reconstructive surgery?** - 9.1 per month
  
5. **What was the average waiting time for receiving reconstruction in your trust between 2018-2019 (in weeks) for:**
  - a. **Free- flap reconstruction**
    - **Immediate?** - There is no average waiting time.
    - **Delayed?** - 14.5 weeks
  
  - b. **Implant reconstruction**
    - **Immediate?** - 9.9 weeks
    - **Delayed?** - 12.8 weeks
  
6. **What is the current average waiting time for receiving delayed reconstruction in your trust (in weeks) for:**
  - a. **Free- flap reconstruction**
    - **Immediate?** - 11.2 weeks
    - **Delayed?** - 69.5 weeks
  
  - b. **Implant reconstruction**
    - **Immediate?** - 11.2 weeks
    - **Delayed?** - 58.2 weeks
  
7. **What is the current average wait time for additional surgeries (i.e. balancing and correction surgeries) in your trust?**

42 weeks

### **Part B- Reconstructive and balancing breast surgery- procedural limits**

- 8. Does your trust operate under any policies or guidance which place limitations on the number of reconstructive surgical procedures a breast cancer patient is able to access, including limiting the number of balancing surgeries (procedures to the unaffected breast to ensure it matches the reconstructed breast)?**
- a. If so, could you please provide details of the limitations and how long they have been in place?**

No. It is a clinician's decision taken on a risk benefit basis with the primary endpoint being patient satisfaction.

### **Part C- Reconstructive and balancing breast surgery- time limits**

- 9. Does your trust operate under any policies or guidance which place limitations on the timescale for surgical procedures a breast cancer patient is able to access, including for balancing surgeries?**
- a. If so, could you please provide details of the policy and how long it has been in place?**

No timescales of this nature exist. Patients are operated in time order unless clinical need dictates more urgent care.

In line with the Information Commissioner's directive on the disclosure of information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 your request will form part of our disclosure log on the Trust's website. However please be assured that we anonymise all responses prior to adding them to the disclosure log.

I hope that this response has provided you with the information you had requested. If you have any queries or wish to discuss the information supplied, please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone or in writing. If however, you are dissatisfied with the way in which your request has been handled and would like an internal review, you will need to contact me in writing at the above address or via [cdda-tr.cddftfoi@nhs](mailto:cdda-tr.cddftfoi@nhs).

If you remain dissatisfied with our response following an internal review you have the right to appeal to The Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. More information is available on their website; [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely

**Corporate Records and Freedom of Information Facilitator**